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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000987

SIPDIS

CORRECTED COPY - CLASSIFICATION PARAGRAPH 5

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/08/2019
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, MOPS, TU
SUBJECT: TURKEY: AMBASSADOR'S TOUR D'HORIZON WITH DCHOD
IGSIZ

REF: ANKARA 985

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Jeffrey, Reasons
1.4 (b,d)

1. (C) Summary: During a tour d'horizon with Ambassador on
July, TGS Deputy Chief GEN Hasan Igsiz:

-- Said the TGS is holding high level talks with the Syrian military in Istanbul July 7-8 and will reinforce the U.S. message that it must stop the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq. Igsiz said Turkey passed information provided by GEN Petraeus during his July 1 meeting with TGS Chief Basbug (reftel) to the Syrians, and warned Syria to "take care of the problem";

-- Expressed deep frustration over the intelligence sharing office established in Erbil under the U.S.-Turkey-Iraq trilateral mechanism, calling the Erbil office "a waste of time";

-- Stressed that Turkey's patience with the KRG was wearing thin. Turkey understands that the period leading up to the July 25 elections is sensitive, but plans to press the KRG shortly after elections to deliver on promises to take action against the PKK or "we will do it ourselves";

-- Echoing GEN Basbug with CENTCOM COCOM Petraeus, reiterated that the PKK challenge could not be resolved by military means alone, but said more progress was needed on the military front in order to allow the non-military aspects to move forward. He pressed the U.S. to do more to help, and, referring to the promised armed UAVs, asked "Where are the additional capabilities that were promised?";

-- Stressed that Turkey is very careful about any flights in the Aegean, and accused the Greeks of playing up the issue of Farmakonisi and Agathonisi in the hope that the U.S. would recognize these "geographic formations" as Greek territory; and

-- Decried Israel's decision not to renew the lease of Heron UAVs to Turkey beyond July this year. He said this decision appeared to be political, not technical, and warned this could cause "real problems" in Turkish-Israeli mil-to-mil relations.

2. (C) Comment: The Turkish military has done heavy lifting in Afghanistan and is trying to be helpful on both Pakistan and Syria. Its primary preoccupation, however, remains the fight against the PKK, and its leadership is deeply concerned about the PKK becoming an even more destabilizing influence in both Iraq and Turkey following U.S. withdrawal. Igsiz did not shy away from the "geographic formations" argument regarding Agathonisi and Farmakonisi, which is worrisome, but

he did express openness to direct dialogue with the Greek military. His suspicions about the Israeli decision to terminate the Heron lease may reflect the damage done by Erdogan's Davos outburst in Turkish-Israeli relations. A worsening of mil-to-mil relations between these countries would be a negative development for Turkey and for the region. End Summary and Comment.

3. (C) Ambassador met with Turkish General Staff (TGS) Deputy Chief of Staff (DCHOD) Hasan Igsiz on July 7 and briefed him on President Obama's trip to Russia, and provided U.S. views on regional developments. He was accompanied by ODC Chief and a notetaker.

Syria

4. (C) Igsiz informed the Ambassador that the Turkish military believes that it is important to pull Syria away from Iran. In light of this, the TGS was holding a "high level dialogue" with Syrian military representatives in Istanbul July 7-8. Igsiz said he had instructed the senior Turkish representative at the dialogue, Deputy J3 Major General Erdal Ozturk, to deliver the information about Al Qaeda facilitators that General Petraeus provided during his July 1 meeting with General Basbug and warn the Syrians to "take care of the problem." He applauded the recent CENTCOM visit to Damascus, calling it "a good initiative," and expressed hope that, if the Syrians take serious steps, the U.S. would increase contact. Ambassador noted that the U.S. had taken a decision to send its ambassador back to Damascus, but warned that further engagement with Syria was a possibility, not a certainty, and will depend on Syria's actions. Igsiz replied that, without U.S. engagement, Syria would have only one alternative: Iran.

Iraq

5. (C) While acknowledging that the military alone could not solve the PKK challenge, Igsiz said more results were needed on the military side before the U.S. withdrew from Iraq: "As long as they have weapons in their hands, we cannot go anywhere." Igsiz thanked the U.S. for the intelligence support provided to TGS against the PKK, and pressed the U.S. to follow-through on the offer to provide "additional support" (referring to U.S. sales of the Predator and Reaper systems to Turkey) by asking: "Where is the additional support?"

6. (C) Expressing deep frustration with the KRG leadership, Igsiz said Turkey recognized that the period leading up to the July 25 elections was sensitive, but will need to see the KRG take concrete steps against the PKK shortly after the elections. Otherwise, Igsiz warned, Turkey will "have to do the job ourselves."

7. (C) Igsiz also vented about the intelligence sharing office in Erbil established under the U.S.-Turkey-Iraq trilateral mechanism: "We are wasting our time." He said the TGS had sent questions (the answers to which Turkey already knew) to the center to test whether the center could actually provide useful information, but is still awaiting a reply. The only response Turkey had received from the center was that the questions had to be sent to Baghdad. "If this is the case," Igsiz asked, "Why do we even bother with a center in Erbil? We might as well have the center in Baghdad."

8. (C) Ambassador said the U.S. takes seriously the requests General Basbug made during his meeting with General Petraeus (septel) and is working hard to respond to them. He urged Turkey to do more on its part to take advantage of the military momentum and expand the whole-of-government effort to defeat the PKK. He also urged the TGS to be realistic about what actions the KRG can take against the PKK.

Afghanistan/Pakistan

9. (C) Ambassador thanked Turkey for its significant contributions in the international efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Igsiz welcomed a shift in the U.S. approach to Pakistan, saying it has lead to immediate results. Even though Afghanistan and Pakistan are separate countries, the challenges confronting these countries must be seen together and not in isolation. Igsiz informed Ambassador that the Turkish general who accompanied FM Davutoglu during the latter's visit to Pakistan (reftel) was invited to visit the Pakistani military headquarters. There, the Turkish general was handed a list of equipment that the Pakistani military desperately needed. Igsiz said Turkey is doing its best to support Pakistan's military, but cautioned that the Pakistanis are extremely proud and, as a result, not easy to help.

Aegean: Greeks Seeking Recognition, Not Security

10. (C) Ambassador pressed Igsiz about ongoing flights of

Turkish fighters over Agathonisi and Farmakonisi (ref b) and stressed that these flights were dangerous and counterproductive. He urged the military to engage with its Greek counterparts, expressed support for Turkey's proposal of a code-of-conduct for military flights in the Aegean and stressed the need for a more constructive approach to resolve standing differences between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean. He stressed that the USG is also pressing the Greek side to adopt a less confrontational approach to allow room for a solution on the Aegean complex.

11. (C) Igsiz countered by noting that the Turkish military is "very careful" about flights in the Aegean and accusing Greece of creating an issue out of these flights in the hope that the U.S. will take its sides regarding "these rocks." Igsiz asserted that the Greek government, since 1996, had been encouraging settlers to move to Agathonisi and Farmakonisi in order to reinforce its claims on them. He said this was "unacceptable," and that the status of these "geographic formations" should be the subject of international agreement. Ambassador noted that the U.S. is party to the Paris Convention which addresses the status of the Dodecanese, and urged Turkey to avoid action that might force the U.S. to take an official position on this issue.

End of UAV Lease Threatens Turkey-Israel Mil Relations

12. (C) Igsiz told Ambassador that Israel's decision to end its lease of Heron UAVs to Turkey by the end of July will damage Turkish-Israeli military relations. He said even though relations were strained in January following PM Erdogan's Davos outburst and the Israeli Land Forces Commander's impolitic reaction, a call from the Israeli CHOD to TGS CHOD Basbug helped diffuse tensions. Igsiz repeatedly asserted that the decision to end the Heron lease appeared to be political, not technical, in nature and warned that this will create "real problems" in Turkey's bilateral military relationship with Israel.

Caucasus and Russia

13. (C) Ambassador briefed on the President's meetings in Moscow and provided copies of the various documents agreed to during the meetings. He discussed as well the status of the Minsk Group efforts and the U.S. position on that negotiation, and the "parallel but separate" Turkish-Armenian rapprochement.

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JEFFREY